



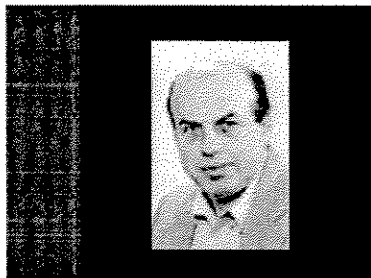
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## Profile



### Natan Sharansky

Israeli Minister of Jerusalem and  
Diaspora Affairs



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#### Institutional Affiliations

- **Zionist Forum:** former president
- **Yisrael B'aliyah Party:** founder and chairman
- **Peace Watch:** board member
- **Jerusalem Report:** former contributing editor
- **One Jerusalem:** cofounder and chairman

#### Government Service

- **Minister of Industry and Trade:** June 1996-1999
- **Minister of Internal Affairs:** July 1999-July 2000
- **Minister of Housing and Construction:** appointed March 2001
- **Deputy Prime Minister:** appointed March 2001
- **Minister of Jerusalem and Diaspora Affairs:** current
- **Israel Citizens Information Council:** director
- **Coordination Forum for Countering Anti-Semitism:** chairman (18)

#### Education

- **Institute of Physics, Moscow**

#### Publications

- **Fear No Evil (1998)**
- **The Case for Democracy (2004)**

#### Highlights & Quotes

The State of the Union Address and Bush's second Inaugural Address focused U.S. and international attention on Natan Sharansky, author of *The Case for Democracy: The Power of Freedom to Overcome Tyranny & Terror*. Pundits and reporters noted that the president's lofty rhetoric about "ending tyranny in our world" and guaranteeing "freedom from fear" echoed Sharansky's language.

In his book Sharansky makes the case that U.S. foreign policy should be guided at least as much by ideals as national interests. Part of that idealism should be a mission to export freedom to countries and societies living in fear, focusing primarily on the Arab world.(1) According to Sharansky, the United States should not only prevent terrorists and terrorist states from obtaining weapons of mass destruction, but should also "understand how powerful weapons of mass construction can be in the hands of the free world."

No doubt that Bush and Sharansky, a Soviet émigré who is a top political official in Israel, share a similar perspective about international affairs, especially in the Middle East. Following his Inaugural Address, the president told the *New York Times* that Sharansky's book confirmed what he already believed and that the Israeli author's thinking was "part of my presidential DNA."(2)

**From "Prisoner of Zion" to Israel's Minister of  
Diaspora Affairs**

## Right Web Connections

### Individuals

- [Elliott Abrams](#)
- [Richard Cheney](#)
- [Douglas Feith](#)
- [William Kristol](#)
- [Richard Perle](#)
- [Paul Wolfowitz](#)
- [Meyrav Wurmser](#)

### Organizations

- [American Enterprise Institute \(AEI\)](#)
- [American Israeli Public Affairs Committee \(AIPAC\)](#)
- [Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs](#)
- [Middle East Forum](#)

According to Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in the 1970s Sharansky engaged "in underground Zionist activities" until his 1977 arrest by Soviet authorities on charges of treason and espionage. Although the U.S. government denied any connection between Sharansky and the CIA, he was sentenced in 1978 to 13 years imprisonment. An international campaign, supported by Presidents Carter and Reagan, led to Sharansky's release on February 11, 1986 as part of an East-West spy exchange. That same night the self-described "Prisoner of Zion" arrived in Israel, where he quickly became the leading voice for the cause of Soviet Jewry.

In 1988 Sharansky founded and became the first president of the Zionist Forum. In 1995 Sharansky formed a political party to represent new Jewish immigrants to Israel. Always closely allied with Likud, particularly its most extreme factions, the Yisrael B'Aliya party no longer maintains its own independence and has effectively merged with Likud.

A longtime member of the Knesset, Sharansky has held a wide range of cabinet posts including Interior Minister, Housing and Construction Minister, and Industry and Trade Minister. Sharansky served as Deputy Prime Minister from March 2001 to February 2003, when he broke with Sharon over plans to withdraw Israeli settlers from the occupied Gaza Strip. Sharansky, who continues to oppose any concessions to the Palestinians, insists there should be "no territory for terror." (3)

Upon resigning as deputy prime minister, Sharansky was appointed Minister for Jerusalem Affairs and the Diaspora as part of a deal in which his Yisrael B'Aliya became a branch of the ruling Likud party. (4)

Sharansky is founding member and current chairman of One Jerusalem, which has one objective: "Saving a united Jerusalem as the united capital of Israel." Among other activities, One Jerusalem provides "essential information about the destruction of Jewish artifacts in sacred places like Temple Mount." Other prominent U.S. cofounders of One Jerusalem include outgoing Undersecretary of Defense for Policy [Douglas Feith](#) and [David Steinmann](#), who is chairman of the [Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs](#) and a board member of the [Center for Security Policy](#). (5)

Dore Gold, also a cofounder of One Jerusalem, is top Likud deputy and former Israeli ambassador to the United Nations. Referring to Sharansky's influential role in shaping U.S. policy, Gold said: "Sharansky has a very powerful moral voice because he was a prisoner of Zion." (6)

Sharansky shares the Israeli government's conviction

that the entire city of Jerusalem is the country's capital. Israel annexed East Jerusalem after the 1967 war, and have since steadfastly refused to release it to the Palestinians, despite repeated UN resolutions declaring Israel in violation of international law. The Palestinian Authority claim East Jerusalem and would like to make it the capital of the proposed Palestinian state.

For Sharansky, the accusation that the views of some pro-Israel policy advocates are clouded by their dual loyalty to both Israel and the United States misses the fundamental truth about the Jewish diaspora. "I see the Jewish world as one," said Sharansky, "those who are living and those who are not yet living in Israel. It is part of the same body of people who left Egypt 3000 years ago, and they are on their way to the land of Israel." For this reason, Sharansky says that the Israeli government must be closely involved in the problems of the Jews in the diaspora. "In fact," he said, "on my initiative was created a special government committee on relations with the diaspora, and I'm chairman all these years." (7)

In his role as Diaspora Minister, Sharansky travels throughout the United States and authorizes government funding to establish pro-Israel groups on U.S. campuses. "Israel has few strategic assets as critical as American Jewry," according to the Israeli minister. "The fact that the world's leading superpower is a steadfast ally of Israel is due in large measure to this proud and activist community."

Sharansky charges that Middle East studies departments at U.S. universities have adopted a vehemently anti-Israel posture due to "years of massive investments of money and effort by Arab states and the Palestinians." As the product of "generous Saudi funding," university departments have "been set up to establish pseudo-scientific theories, presenting Israel as the last colonial state, whose very existence is immoral regardless of borders."

To counter this Arab conspiracy, Sharansky intends to "recapture the campus" with "a concentrated effort" and change in direction in "Israel's informational efforts." (8) Sharansky has also established, by way of the government's Israel Citizens Information Council, the Hasbara Program, which sponsors an information program for Jews living outside Israel. As part of the Hasbara campaign, "We are trying to be sure that on every campus there will be a critical mass that will be able to stand up and be counted to defend Israel." Sharansky helped establish the World Congress of Jewish Activists, which sponsors training programs in Jerusalem for students around the world, including U.S. high school students. The trainees are taught "how to defend Israel." (9)

The Israeli minister says that his work on U.S.

campuses counts on the strong backing of Prime Minister Sharon. But the Israeli government is not alone in this effort. "I'm working with the AIPAC [American-Israeli Political Affairs Committee], Hillel of course, and Caravan for Democracy, Friends of Likud as well as supporters of the Likud Movement," explained Sharansky.

As Minister of Jerusalem and Diaspora Affairs, Sharansky advocates the "ingathering of Jews" in Israel. In a letter published by the Israel Citizens Information Council, a project of his ministry, Sharansky wrote: "In Israel there is no such thing as an 'ordinary citizen.' This country consists largely of immigrants, but immigrants only in the sense that they were born someplace else, just to return home, to Israel, later. The community we have created-a diverse, vibrant and growing democracy-is best represented by its citizens." (10) Sharansky describes himself as "the representative of the government and people of Israel to the Jewish world." (11)

Sharansky is also the chairman of The Coordination Forum for Countering Anti-Semitism, a government forum that brings together various government ministries, including its foreign ministry and information center, together with various Jewish organizations including the World Jewish Congress and the Anti-Defamation League (ADL). The government-sponsored forum commits "Israel as the Jewish state" to protect "the security of Jewish communities around the world" and to "eradicate all anti-Jewish activity."

Speaking in the capacity of chairman of the anti-Semitism forum, Sharansky warned that under the veil of "political criticism of Israel" lurks discrimination against the State of Israel to which a double standard is applied, and doubts are cast regarding its very right to exist."

Sharansky frequently generalizes about the character and mission of Jews, whether living in Israel or members of the diaspora. Sharansky, for example, stated: "We Jews are strong on history and being logical and believing in moral principles, so it's very important every Jew should choose himself or herself as an ambassador of his people and of his country." (12)

When the U.S. media reported that in August 2004 that the FBI had been investigating clandestine information-sharing meetings involving a Pentagon official working for Douglas Feith, Israeli intelligence officials, and representatives of the American-Israeli Political Affairs Committee (AIPAC), Sharansky was the Israeli government official who publicly denied the allegations of spying. Sharansky suggested the criminal investigation was the result of a U.S. government interagency "rivalry," singling out "the Pentagon and

the CIA."

### The Neoconservative Connection

President Bush is not the first president to give Sharansky a personal audience. After he was released from prison in the Soviet Union, Sharansky met with President Ronald Reagan-one the three men that Sharansky credits for ending the "evil empire." Sharansky told the *Weekly Standard* that in addition to President Reagan the other two men who form his trinity of heroes are Soviet dissident Andrei Sakharov (for whom Sharansky served as a translator) and Henry "Scoop" Jackson. Senator Jackson led the Cold Warrior wing of the Democratic Party, and he also was the leading congressional supporter of Israel. Many of today's most prominent neocons, including Richard Perle of the American Enterprise Institute and Deputy National Security Adviser Elliott Abrams, worked on Jackson's staff.(13)

For his part, Perle, a leading neoconservative who has advised the Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the Likud party, boasts that "Scoop Jackson" and Natan Sharansky are his two personal heroes. (14)

In his book Sharansky describes U.S. policy as a continuum involving many of his closest friends and collaborators in the United States, including Abrams, Perle, Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, outgoing Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Douglas Feith, and Cheney's chief of staff "Scooter" Libby. "If you check their background, most of them were connected either to Senator Jackson or to the Reagan administration, or both," wrote Sharansky.

In the United States, Sharansky is a frequent guest at neoconservative institutions, especially the American Enterprise Institute. Although he resists any political labeling aside from "Zionist," his writing and speeches are laden with the political terminology and frameworks of the neocons, including such terms as "moral clarity," "appeasement," and "totalitarianism." In his writings in *Commentary* and other neoconservative publications, Sharansky rejects the attempts to establish a "moral equivalence" (another stock neocon term) between the Israelis and the Palestinians.

Referring to the Palestinian Authority and Israel, Sharansky in a speech to an April 2002 pro-Israel rally in Washington said: "Equating good and evil is an evil itself..We cannot accept moral equivalence between those who see human bodies as a shield for terrorists, and those for whom human rights are the highest value."(15) Paralleling Bush's own description of international affairs as a divide between good and evil, and those who are fighting terrorism and those who are supporting it, Sharansky writes in his book that the

world is "divided between those who are prepared to confront evil and those who are willing to appease it."

In a December 2004 review of Sharansky's new book in the *Weekly Standard*, Meyrav Wurmser expressed her delight that "one of the great champions of freedom is now influencing the thinking of the most powerful man in the world." Wurmser, the Israeli-born director of the Center for Middle East Policy at the neoconservative Hudson Institute, concludes her homage to Sharansky warning: "Dictators everywhere, take note." (16)

Both the United States and Israel have much in common, according to Sharansky. One of the links, he said in a speech at a forum sponsored by the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), which was the basis for an article in *Commentary*, the journal of the American Jewish Committee, is the spreading scourge of anti-Semitism. "Anti-Americanism in the Islamic world and anti-Americanism in Europe are in fact linked," argued Sharansky, because "both bear an uncanny resemblance to anti-Semitism." In this essay entitled "On Hating Jews," Sharansky wrote: "America embodies a different-a nonconforming-idea of the good, and refuses to abandon its moral clarity about the objective worth of that idea."

Moreover, Minister of Diaspora Affairs Sharansky believes that "Israel and the Jewish people share something essential with the United States." According to Sharansky, The Jews have long held that they were chosen to play a special role in history, to be what their prophets called 'a light unto nations'. It is similar with the United States-a nation that has long regarded itself as entrusted with a mission to be what John Winthrop in the 17th century called "a city on a hill" and Ronald Reagan in the 20th century parsed as a "shining city on a hill." (17)

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